

**Questions for the Record from
REPRESENTATIVE Frederica S. Wilson**

Committee on Education and the Workforce

**Full Committee Hearing:
“Competencies Over Degrees: Transitioning to a Skills-Based Economy”**

**Thursday, June 22, 2023
10:15 a.m.**

Representative Frederica S. Wilson (D-FL)
Questions for All Witnesses

- 1. What are your own organizations—who are leaders and innovators in credentialing and work-based learning—doing to address the gap that exists in soft skills acquisition, such as team building, communication, collaboration, etc., which are also in high-demand by our employers?**

Dr. Karin Kimbrough Answer:

One of our primary contributions at LinkedIn has been to help drive the shift toward skills-first hiring through our platform, tools, and insights. Internally, we have removed degree requirements from all of our jobs that do not have an explicit need (i.e., legal positions). And to ensure skills are at the forefront of our jobs, we now require that all current and future jobs include 3-5 “Suggested Skills.”

At LinkedIn, we think of skills-first hiring as focusing on a candidate's skills and abilities to do the job, and we are currently working on building this into our hiring wherever we can. We also know that soft skills, which are transferable between many jobs, will continue to be the most important even as we encounter new technologies now and in the future. Skills like Leadership, Teamwork, Negotiation, Problem-solving, People management, Relationship building, Creativity, and Emotional intelligence are highly sought after and needed most in today's economy.

- 2. How would you propose collaborating with leaders in higher education, particularly at large urban, public, minority-serving institutions, so that they benefit from some of your proposed models?**

Dr. Karin Kimbrough Answer:

We need to make sure that community colleges and other institutions of higher education are aware of the skills required for today's in-demand jobs. That way they can ensure their curricula is informed by industry demands, thereby helping students develop those skills and competencies through classroom time and on-the-job learning. Leveraging public-private partnerships that highlight timely labor market information (LMI) is critical (LinkedIn has shared LMI with higher education institutions).

Colleges and universities also use LinkedIn Learning to complement classroom education, particularly with career services offices focused on ensuring students are prepared to look for jobs and are familiar with the skills and concepts that employers look for in their new hires.

Finally, these organizations also need to work with employers and students to make sure students complete their credential, having clearly demonstrated the skills they developed. We should make sure that students leave with an industry-recognized credential, such as a certification or skills verification, etc., as further validation of their skills development.

3. How can we begin, even before college, to foster collaboration between formal curriculum tracks and competencies, credentialing, and organizations like yours?

Dr. Karin Kimbrough Answer:

We recommend policymakers, business leaders, and communities work together to help to accelerate the shift to skills-first hiring. This includes urging the expanded use of skills-first hiring in government jobs; developing public-private efforts around skills-first strategies; funding public efforts to ensure education and workforce programs are teaching the skills required by employers; and including funding for programs to support current workers whose jobs are most at risk due to changing skill demands.

Signing into law the bipartisan Chance to Compete Act, which LinkedIn supports, would be another good step as is promoting skills-first hiring as part of the reauthorization of WIOA.

The need is clear: In the US, nearly 70% of jobs require a bachelor's degree but only 37% of the workforce has one. And the benefits are equally as clear – a skills-first approach adds up to nearly 20 times more eligible workers to employer talent pools. The good news is that progress is being made – roughly one in five job postings in the US no longer require degrees, up from 15% in 2021. In the last year, more than 45% of hirers on LinkedIn explicitly used skills data to fill their roles, up 12% year over year.

My own experience with my 5,000 Role Models program has shown that we cannot wait until students reach higher education.